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**MARYLAND SHERIFFS'
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

Sheriff Darren M. Popkin
Montgomery County
President

Karen J. Kruger
Executive Director
General Counsel

December 16, 2013

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Room TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 12-375 (Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services)

Dear Madam Secretary:

On behalf of the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA), I write to express our concern and disappointment concerning the Order and Further Notice of the Proposed Rule Making released by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which becomes effective on February 11, 2014. This order seriously hampers the ability of Maryland Sheriffs to effectively secure and manage their jails, and fails to consider what is required in a correctional facility to provide telephone use to inmates. Our comments below encompass both the current FCC Order regarding interstate calls as well as the impact of potential regulation regarding intrastate calls.

There has been much attention to the fact that inmates and their families are often required to pay more than prevailing market rates for phone calls in order to stay in touch. That criticism is heightened when the rates involve commissions paid back to the jails or prisons housing the inmates. However, we believe that the FCC has failed to appreciate the complex and specialized environment in which inmate calling services are offered. Jail facilities of all sizes must balance the needs of inmates carefully against the need to protect the public, jail staff and the inmate population.

Inmate phone systems cannot be compared with standard common carrier services. They include security components that have consistently been able to detect criminal activity occurring inside correctional facilities. Individual calls are carefully managed and controlled; and the service integrates specific technological measures required by jails to ensure facility security and public safety.

The order disregards this reality and creates a regulatory environment that jeopardizes these services by *prohibiting any revenue recovery by jails of the costs associated in administering inmate calling services and monitoring phone calls to protect the public*. All services provided in any sector have inherent costs of providing the service that must be

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recovered; correctional facilities are no different in needing to recover costs associated with providing telephone services to their inmates.

Maryland Sheriffs utilize the funds collected from telephone services for a variety of programs and services, including but not limited to, educational and vocational programs, substance abuse treatment programs, law libraries, recreation supplies and other services that benefit inmates such as transportation for inmates being released from custody. The ability to maintain these services to reduce recidivism and enhance the safety both in the jails and in the communities is critical.

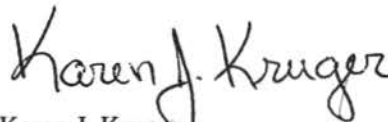
We urge the Commission to fully consider the critical public safety aspects of inmate calling services, the individualized environment in which services are offered, and the full impact on safety and security of any particular regulatory approach. If there are abuses of the call rates that are charged, those abuses must be addressed, but not by establishing a "one size fits all" model and intruding on our authority to effectively manage our jail operations.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Sheriff Darren M. Popkin
Montgomery County
President



Karen J. Kruger
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, United States Senator
The Honorable Ben Cardin, United States Senator
Maryland Congressional Delegation
All Maryland Sheriffs